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A HAPPY PAIR.

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A HAPPY PAIR

A COMEDIETTA IN ONE ACT

BY

S. THEYRE SMITH

NEW AMERICAN EDITION, CORRECTLY REPRINTED FROM THE ORIGINAL AUTHORIZED ACTING EDITION, WITH THE ORIGINAL CAST OF THE CHARACTERS, ARGUMENT OF THE PLAY, TIME OF REPRESENTATION, SCENE AND PROPERTY PLOTS, DIAGRAM OF THE STAGE SETTING, SIDES OF ENTRANCE AND EXIT, RELATIVE POSITIONS OF THE PERFORMERS, EXPLANATION OF THE STAGE DIRECTIONS, ETC., AND ALL OF THE STAGE BUSINESS.

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A HAPPY PAIR.

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

St. James' Theatre,
London,
March 2nd, 1868.

MR. HONEYTON Mr. W. Farren.
MRS. HONEYTON Miss Herbert.

TIME OF PLAYING—FORTY MINUTES.

THE ARGUMENT.

CONSTANCE HONEYTON, a wife of only a few months, while waiting for her husband to come to breakfast tries to pass away the time by writing letters and gathering flowers for FERDINAND; and she remembers the time when he used to give her flowers and thinks there has been a sad falling off in his affection since their marriage and wishes that human beings, like flowers, could be united without all harmony being lost. But the loving woman determines not to think of their marriage in this melancholy fashion, imagines that her husband is pre-occupied about something, and resolves that their life shall still be *couleur de rose* if a woman's love can make it so. In the morning's mail are two letters for herself from Florence and Kitty Hayland. The former tells her how sure she is of her perfect bliss with FERDINAND, while the latter having read between the lines of her friend's last letter, tells her in a few energetic words of her confidence that her husband is the cause of this unhappiness, and implores her to assert herself, to treat him exactly as he treats her and not to relax until he is quite subdued. The loyal wife is greatly shocked and very indignant towards Kitty whose interference she angrily resents, and is about to burn the letter when MR. HONEYTON ill-naturedly enters the room. Then

ensues a scene of sulky indifference on his part in response to the affectionate words and caresses of his wife which annoy and disgust him to the point of finally telling her that he married her simply to oblige her, which so hurts and enrages poor CONSTANCE that she suddenly realizes that she has killed his love by too much cherishing; so she reluctantly adopts Kitty's advice and proceeds to pay him back in his own coin, which completely overwhelms MR. HONEYTON with astonishment and irritation. But the change of treatment is productive of a good effect until he finds Kitty's letter which has been carelessly dropped. *That* makes it quite another matter. He now understands the alteration in his wife's manner and will not allow such a piece of trickery to succeed; so he acts the part of the loving husband until CONSTANCE joyfully throws aside her mask, when he hands her the letter with the assurance that he has discovered her table of rules, which plainly shows her the mistake she has made in assuming a part, and she now tells him that he has destroyed all *pretended* opposition by arousing the real feeling itself, and that henceforth she will not need another's direction but will speak her own words, stand on her own ground and cast duty and obedience to the winds. FERDINAND is thoroughly awakened at last and recognizes that his wife's anger is all due to his coldness and ill-temper; and with penitent sincerity he begs her forgiveness which she is only too happy to grant.

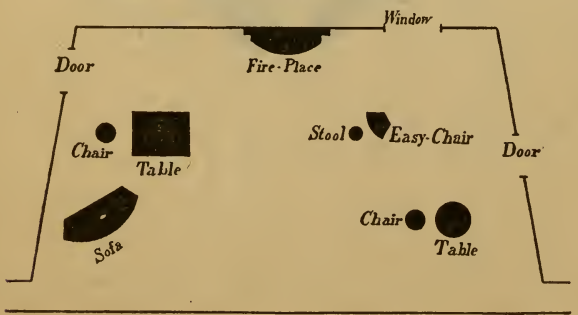
COSTUMES.

MR. HONEYTON.—Négligé morning suit.
MRS. HONEYTON.—Fashionable morning gown. Hair, *à la mode.*

PROPERTIES.

Furniture and appointments as per scene plot. Books, ornaments, etc., and thread in work-box on table, L. C. Breakfast and service for two persons, and jar of honey on table, R.; also five letters and two newspapers. Cigars in case on mantel. Bunch of roses for MRS. HONEYTON. Wide-awake hat (for second entrance) and matches for MR. HONEYTON. Fire-shovel, tongs, etc.

STAGE SETTING AND SCENE PLOT.



SCENE.—Fancy chamber boxed in 3G. Doors, R. 3 E. and L. 2 E., Mantel and fire-place, with fire, C. Window, L. in flat. Breakfast table and chair, R. Small table and chair down L. C. Easy chair and foot-stool. Carpet down.

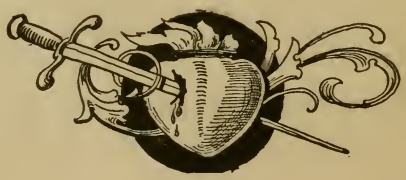
N. B. Set scenery is not essential to the action, and may be dispensed with if preferred.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

The player is supposed to face the audience. R., means right; L., left; C., centre; R. C., right of centre; L. C., left of centre; D. F., door in the flat or back scene; R. F., right side of the flat; L. F., left side of the flat; R. D., right door; L. D., left door; 1 E., first entrance; 2 E., second entrance; U. E., upper entrance; 1, 2, or 3 G., first, second or third grooves; UP STAGE, towards the back; DOWN STAGE, towards the footlights.

R.	R. C.	C.	L. C.	L.

NOTE.—The text of this play is correctly reprinted from the original authorized acting edition, without change. The introductory matter has been carefully prepared by an expert, and is the only part of this book protected by copyright.





A HAPPY PAIR.

Scene.—*A breakfast room elegantly furnished—breakfast on the table at* R., *fireplace at back in the centre. Large window,* L., *sofa* R., *table* L. C. *doors* R. U. E. *and* L. 2 E.

Enter, MRS. HONEYTON.

There, Ferdinand's not down yet! How late he is. I've had some breakfast, for I was so hungry I could wait no longer—written two letters, been twice round the garden, and gathered these roses on purpose for him. (*takes some thread from a work-box and begins to tie them together*) There was a time, five months ago, when he used to give me bouquets and not I him. That was before we were married, of course. There seems to be some dreadful principle in human nature, some horrid law, that the man must pay the attentions before marriage and the woman afterwards; and the men have the best of the bargain, too, for I am sure in my most coquettish moods I never received Ferdinand's attentions, then, with a hundredth part the coldness with which he receives mine now! O, there's been a sad falling off in him, a sad falling off, a gradual decadence, a decline and fall in his affections like a thermometer in an increasing frost. There! (*holding up the bouquet*) Don't they look nice now they're tied together? How beautifully they harmonize! O, the happy flowers, that don't change their tint and become something quite different directly they're coupled, as human creatures too often do directly *they're* tied together—pleasant flowers that can be united in this way without all harmony being lost. But I won't think of our union, Ferdy's and mine, in this melancholy fashion. Perhaps he's only a little put out about something—I will still be cheerful, and happy, and loving, and in time he must come round again, and be as nice and affectionate as ever. Our life shall not be so unlike the flowers but that it shall be still *couleur de rose* if a woman's

love can make it so. And he's quite a darling after all. O, (*turning to the table*) here are the letters. Let me see (*looking at them one after the other*) For Ferdy, Ferdy, Ferdy, me, Ferdy. There they are all ready for him with the roses a-top of them ; and there's his chair, (*pushing an easy chair to the table*) and there's his footstool, (*giving it an affectionate pat*) and there are the newspapers, so now for my letter. O, from Florence, of course, (*opens it*) with a few lines from Kitty too. Now then, Florence first.—"Own precious darling of a Constance"—dear affectionate girl—"just returned from our tour in Spain—Spain is the most beautiful"—'m—'m—'m—O, it must be lovely 'm—'m—'m—O how charming 'm—'m—'m—Ha, ha, ha ! just fancy—'m—'m—'m—"tell you more when we meet. I will come and stay with you as soon as you like—give my love to Ferdinand, and believe me"—ah, the dear girl. "P. S. I picture to myself your perfect bliss with Ferdinand, my heart tells me that you are indeed a happy pair." (*sadly*) Does it tell you true? (*gaily*) O, of course, yes. yes. Now, for Kitty. "Dearest Con. I have only time for three lines. I saw your last letter to Flo: and I am sure you are not happy." What ! I'm certain I never said so—"gather this generally from your note." I detest people who gather things generally. "Now, darling Con., this unhappiness can only spring from one cause, your husband—married unhappiness always does spring from that one cause, the husband. I need not pause to tell you that I have felt certain from the first that your Ferdinand, whom, as you may remember, I did not rejoice at your marrying—" (No ! she wanted to marry him herself) "—that your Ferdinand 'm—'m—would turn out a tyrant, a brute, but let me entreat you to crush anything of that kind at once. Directly he shows the cloven-foot, stamp upon it. Prompt resistance is the only thing. Hold the mirror up to his tyrannical nature by treating him exactly as he treats you. By our long friendship I beseech you, by our sisterly affection, by all your hopes of happiness, don't be bullied"—(underlined dreadfully) ; "but be most careful not to let him suspect that you have been instigated to this course by anyone, and as you love me, darling Con., don't relax until he's quite subdued." But I don't love her after such a letter—it's shameful, positively shameful. Trying to sow discord between husband and wife. *I* forget my duty and my love? *I*—Oh, Kitty, I couldn't have believed it of you. (*going as if to tear it*) No ! tearing's not bad enough. (*walking promptly to the fire-place*) It deserves burning by the hangman. (*pausing*) No ! I won't burn it yet—I'll—I'll—Here comes Ferdinand ! Perhaps, I'll show it him. (*puts letter in her pocket*)

Enter, MR. HONEYTON, L. D. *He comes surlily to the front.*

Mrs. H. Well, dear. (*he walks across to the window*) Well, my

love. (*he looks up at the sky*) Breakfast's quite ready, my darling. (*he yawns tremendously*) What will you have? (*he pokes the fire*) There are your letters, Ferdy dear.

Honey. (*grunts*) Oh! (*tosses the roses into the slop-basin and takes up the letters*)

Mrs. H. O, Ferdy, I gathered those roses for you myself, and got my feet so wet walking through the dewy grass. Yes, I did, though somebody used to tell me once that my foot was so light it wouldn't brush the dew off a daisy.

Honey. (*coldly*) What a fool somebody must have been—once.

Mrs. H. (*playfully*) Why, my darling, you used to say so before we were married, you know.

Honey. Have I ever said so since we were married?

Mrs. H. I don't think you have, indeed.

Honey. Very well, then. It's plain I've repented of the falsehood, so you needn't throw that in my face again.

Mrs. H. Why, my own Nandy didn't think I meant to reproach him. No, no (*rising and going towards him with the roses*) let me put it in his button hole (*taking hold of his coat*) and——

Honey. Constance, for goodness' sake don't paw me about. Will you have the kindness to give me a cup of tea, and not play the fool? I do very positively decline to be dressed out with flowers like a maypole, or a ritualistic church at Christmas-time.

Mrs. H. (*aside*) O, he's crosser than ever to-day. (*pours out tea and gives it him*) Won't you eat anything, love?

Honey. O, no, don't bother me to eat. Mayn't I even have my own appetite to myself? I abominate having my meals forced down my throat as if I were a confounded cannon.

Mrs. H. (*sitting down and sipping tea*) I've had a letter from Florence Hayland, dearest. (*a pause*) Such a delightful letter. Shall I read you some of it? (*he takes up another letter*) Shall I, Ferdy? You were so fond of Florence, you know. (*a pause*) Shall I read it, Nandy? (*he opens his letter—she reads*) "My own precious darling of a Constance——"

Honey. (*to himself*) Oh, Gibson's found me a pair of horses at last.

Mrs. H. Did you speak, dear? (*continuing*) "We have just returned from our tour in Spain. Spain is quite the most beautiful country you ever beheld. The landscapes are of the most gorgeous colors, being principally——"

Honey. (*to himself*) "Coal black," eh?

Mrs. H. (*to him*) What, dear? (*a pause—she continues*) "The pastures extending in rich luxuriance for miles, have all——"

Honey. (*to himself*) "Been fired." Hum!

Mrs. H. "And the mountains are none of them——"

Honey. (*to himself*) "Less than sixteen hands high.'

Mrs. H. (*to him*) Eh, love? (*reads*) "The people are very curious. All the men have——"

Honey. (*to himself*) "Stringhalt slightly." Don't like that.

Mrs. H. (*to him*) No, dear, of course not. And just listen to this. (*reads*) "All the women go about with——"

Honey. (*to himself*) "One white stocking on the near hind leg."

Mrs. H. (*to him*) What did you say, love? (*a pause*) Isn't it a strange country, Ferdy? And then she says—oh, here—"I will come and stay with you as long as ever you like. Give my love to Ferdinand, and——"

Honey. What's that you're reading?

Mrs. H. Florence Hayland's letter, dear?

Honey. And what does she say about coming to stay?

Mrs. H. That she will come as soon as ever we like, so I'll write at once and tell her——

Honey. Not to come.

Mrs. H. What, Ferdy?

Honey. Tell her not to come.

Mrs. H. O, Ferdy, and you used to like her so.

Honey. Do you understand me?—tell her not to come.

Mrs. H. But, my dear, after inviting her so warmly.

Honey. You must put her off warmly, too, of course. Be as affectionate as you like by letter—goodness knows you've affectionate terms enough at your command.

Mrs. H. But you promised at our marriage, you know, that she should come.

Honey. Oh, marriage promises go for nothing.

Mrs. H. (*reproachfully*) Do they?

Honey. Why, don't they? You promised to obey, you know, but it seems you never meant it.

Mrs. H. Oh, Ferdinand, I did and I do.

Honey. Then obey.

Mrs. H. Whatever you direct, of course—I'll write at once.

Exit, *sorrowfully*, L. *door.*

Honey. Scarcely fair, perhaps, that last insinuation of mine. She does the love and obey business to the letter—too much a great deal. Simply sickens me with it. (*reaching across the table*) Ha, a fly got into the honey! What! you would go in for sweets, sir, would you? How do you like it now, eh? Something too much of this, I fancy. Look at the poor wretch, all glued up together, leg tied to leg and wing to wing, as vainly trying to move easily and naturally in his sweet bondage, as a married man, confound it! Ha, ha! I can sympathize with you, sir—I understand your feelings perfectly. What am I but a miserable fly in the matrimonial honeypot? Upon my soul, this perpetual billing and cooing like a couple of confounded doves—this everlasting pigeon

English, as the Chinaman says, of dears and pets, and sweets and darlings, is worrying me steadily and surely to an early grave. It's all very well when one's courting, and, for, say a week, perhaps after marriage—but to drag all this sweet stuff into your everyday life, to suppose that a man's ordinary existence is to be for ever garnished with loves and doves, and blisses and kisses!—'gad, you might as well provision a campaigning army with Everton toffee! Pah, I must have a cigar to take the sweet taste out of my mouth. My vital spark can't stand this much longer. Where the dickens are my weeds? Faith, if this sort of thing is to go on, the next question will be—where are *hers?* Oh, for a little spirit, a little resistance even; a little less treacle and a little more——

Enter, MRS. HONEYTON, L. *door.*

Constance, where's my cigar-case?

Mrs. H. Here, darling, on the mantelpiece. Shall I pick one out for my own Nandy?

Honey. (*to audience*) Nandy! My name's Ferdinand, you know!

Mrs. H. And shall I light it for him, as I used to do?

Honey. (*to audience*) Confound it! (*furiously*) Will you give me those weeds?

Mrs. H. (*in astonishment*) Ferdy!

Honey. Ferdy now. Plague take it, Constance, must my poor name always either drop its tail like a tadpole, or lose its head as if it had been guilty of high treason? Must it always come limping into the world, with only half its members about it like the statue in Leicester Square?

Mrs. H. A few months ago my Ferdinand would not have spoken to his Constance in this cruel—cruel way.

Honey. My Ferdinand! I don't know Mrs. Honeyton whether you are designedly insulting me by speaking of me as if I were some one else a great distance off, by utterly ignoring my presence in your immediate neighborhood, but let me tell you that it is a figurative way of cutting me dead in my own house which annoys me excessively; do you understand?—which annoys me excessively.

Mrs. H. Very well, dear Ferdinand,—I'll not do it again—I'll try to recollect.

Honey. (*aside*) Still treacle! Linked sweetness long drawn out. (*seating himself*, L.; *she stands at table*, C., *behind him*)

Mrs. H. Ferdinand! (*no answer*) Ferdinand! (*no answer*) Ferdinand!

Honey. (*counting them on his fingers*) Yes, now I'm curious to know how long you intend to go on repeating my name as if you were some eccentric ghost in a haunted housé. That's three times,

Mrs. H. I was trying to attract your attention as I wished to ask you a question——

Honey. Be quick then, please ; my cigar's waiting.

Mrs. H. Why did you marry me, Ferdinand?

Honey. Ha, ha! eh!

Mrs. H. Why did you marry me?

Honey. Why did I marry you? ha, ha! (*rising*) Oh, you showed so distinctly that you wished it—(*strolling towards the door*)—that I did it—(*striking a match*)—'pon my word, merely to oblige you; merely to oblige you, by Jove! Exit, *door* L.

Mrs. H. (*starting up*) It's not true—it's—it's—a dreadful story. To oblige me! when he begged and prayed with tears in his eyes that I'd pity him; when he went down on his knees on the gravel walk, looking so ridiculous but such a darling, and vowed he couldn't live without me ; when he talked about early graves and blighted hopes, and blew first hot and then cold, raving now of fires and then of frosts, his poor heart always at one end of the thermometer or the other, till—till—and all to oblige me! It's a dreadful story. I've spoiled him. I've killed his love for me, as an over careful mother may kill her children, by too much cherishing. I longed to make my love the sunshine of his life, and now I find the weeds have grown and not the flowers. O dear Kitty, thanks, thanks for your timely letter. As my affection only repels him, I'll try what coldness and disdain will do. I'll take a leaf out of his book that shall make him detest his whole library. I'll pay him back in his own coin till he cries out for a reform in the currency. I'll be trodden on no longer without a struggle. The worm has turned at last, the worm has turned. (*reading the letter passionately*) "I have felt certain from the first that your Ferdinand would turn out a tyrant—entreat you to crush anything of that kind at once—directly he shows the cloven foot, stamp upon it—by our long friendship, by our sisterly affection, by all your hopes of happiness, don't be bullied." I'll try it, I will try it, but only for a short time. If it should fail, I will return submissively to my duty; but if Kitty's plan should succeed, I'll—I'll give her—oh, I'll give her *such* a bracelet. It is a delicate game I am going to play but surely I cannot lose, as I am playing for love—only for love. (HONEY *outside* L. 2 E. "Whiffins!") There, he's coming. Can I do it? Yes, I will. Farewell my affection for a short time; (*with a loving look towards the door*) my love puts on its mask and—(*changing her expression suddenly*)—Now I'm ready. (*seats herself at writing-table,* L.)

Enter, MR. HONEYTON, *door* L., *wearing a wide-awake hat.*

Honey. Whiffins! confound it! where's Whiffins? The grey mare has got loose and there's not a groom to be seen about the

place. Provoking, being interrupted in one's weed in this way—where's Whiffins, d'you hear?

Mrs. H. It's not my place to know where Whiffins is.

Honey. (*with a look of some surprise*) It's your place to know where everything is that your husband wants.

Mrs. H. Then I ought to know where his manners are, for he wants them woefully.

Honey. What do you mean, Mrs. Honeyton?

Mrs. H. Take off your hat, sir, when you enter a room where your wife is sitting.

Honey. (*aghast*) Upon my life the grey mare *has* got loose indeed! (*aside—after a moment removes his hat*)

Mrs. H. (*aside*) Oh, how astonished he looks, poor darling. There he has—bless you, Kitty.

Honey. (*severely*) Constance, I find some difficulty in understanding——

Mrs. H. The candor of that confession is the only part of it likely to surprise any one who knows you.

Honey. Do you remember to whom you're speaking?

Mrs. H. Distinctly. It doesn't follow that I must forget you because you so constantly forget yourself.

Honey. Don't reply to me in that way.

Mrs. H. Don't speak to me in that way, then.

Honey. Speak to you! must I remind you once more that it is for you to obey; that that's in the marriage service?

Mrs. H. And must I——

Honey. Hold your tongue, madam.

Mrs. H. Pardon me! (*rising quickly and curtseying*) that's NOT in the marriage service.

Honey. (*aside*) Confound it! How—how abominably—pretty she looks. But of course this must not be submitted to. (*aloud*) Constance!

Mrs. H. (*forgetting*) Yes, dear. (*as he turns sharply*) Well, sir.

Honey. Mrs. Honeyton, I am unable to account for your most extraordinary behavior. Let me tell you Constance, that the duty of a wife——

Mrs. H. Now look here, sir! I won't be lectured—I simply won't be lectured, so you're only wasting your breath. I'm sick of your sermons; your eternal preachee—preachee. Why, I might as well have been married to a Low Church curate.

Honey. I wish to goodness you had been, then, to anybody but me.

Mrs. H. Wonderful! we think alike for once.

Honey. What! Do you mean to say that you regret your marriage with me?

Mrs. H. And if I did say so, have I done anything but imitate you? And if I imitate you, of course I must be right.

Honey. Oh, you flatter me, ma'am.

Mrs. H. Just so; imitation, they say, is the sincerest flattery.

Honey. Well, Constance, I never expected to hear this from your lips.

Mrs. H. No! Why, it must have been quite a pleasant surprise.

Honey. Take care, ma'am, take care; you're playing a dangerous game and may make a mistake.

Mrs. H. I've not in this case, at any rate, for didn't I follow my partner's lead?

Honey. But suppose it was all a joke, Mrs. Honeyton?

Mrs. H. What sir, your marriage?

Honey. No, by gad! that was no joke; there was nothing to laugh at in *that*.

Mrs. H. But it doesn't follow that you didn't intend a joke because there was nothing in it to laugh at, you know, Mr. Honeyton.

Honey. (*aside*) How confounded sharp she is, bless her—I mean hang her; I mean—(*aloud*) Why will you pervert every syllable that comes out of my mouth? You change the meaning of my words——

Mrs. H. Well, any change in them must be for the better, that's one comfort.

Honey. Change! I can tell you there's such a thing as giving bad change for a good sovereign.

Mrs. H. And what represents the good sovereign, sir, if you please?

Honey. The affection that pours from my lips, ma'am—the undebased currency of sincere love—the unclipped money of devoted attachment. All this is——

Mrs. H. The mere worthless coinage of your brain. Attempt to recall one affectionate word of your uttering this morning—one—one threepenny piece, even, of sincere love—one single coin which will not ring false and deserve to be nailed to the counter as a warning to bad husbands.

Honey. (*aside*) It strikes me I'm getting the worst of it.

Mrs. H. No, sir; the circulating medium of your affection is anything but a golden mean, and the notes of your love-language are drawn on the bank of Inelegance.

Honey. Mrs. Honeyton, it is useless prolonging this unseemly bandying of words. For me to set my wit against a woman's would be cowardly, to argue with her absurd. Wit and argument in my case are quite out of place.

Mrs. H. And so they ought to be, considering what shockingly

bad servants they've been to you in the present instance. However I'll relieve you, for a time, of my detested presence.

Honey. Detested! Constance, when you know that I worship —(*aside*) What the dickens am I saying?

Mrs. H. (*aside*) There shall be diamonds in that bracelet, Kitty. (*aloud*) Well, sir, I didn't quite catch the end of that remark.

Honey. Perhaps it had no end, ma'am.

Mrs. H. Nothing more likely, sir; few of your remarks have.

Honey. (*aside*) Confound her!

Mrs. H. Well, good morning, I'm going for a drive.

Honey. No you're not; at least, not in my carriage.

Mrs. H. Oh, you're going to make the carriage a vehicle for tyranny, now, are you?

Honey. Tyranny is not a word for a wife to use to her husband, let me remind you.

Mrs. H. Not to a good husband, I know.

Honey. Then you imply that I am a bad one?

Mrs. H. Ask your conscience, sir.

Honey. I shall not trouble my conscience about the matter, ma'am.

Mrs. H. I wish then your conscience would trouble *you* about it. But the inward monitor has, I fear, long since forgotten its duty.

Honey. Ha, ha! In imitation of my wife, no doubt.

Mrs. H. And for the same reason, perhaps, long-continued neglect.

Honey. Why, what the plague—confound it! you'd provoke a saint.

Mrs. H. Possibly; but the present company, you know, affords no opportunity for the exercise of my talent that way. (*bowing slightly and moving towards door*, L.)

Honey. (*aside*) Hang it! this is getting rather unpleasant. To be on these terms with the wife one adores is—is—I'll speak calmly to her, quite calmly. (*turning towards her just as she calls off*)

Mrs. H. Oh, Whiffins, order me the carriage.

Honey. How dare you, you insolent woman! How dare you defy me to my face, you, you—(*rushes towards her—she bangs the door and leans her back against it*)

Mrs. H. Don't make an exhibition of yourself before the servants at any rate, Mr. Honeyton. Don't let them overhear their master, whom it is their place at least to try to respect, giving way to unseemly fits of rage, and using language only fit for Billingsgate or St. Giles'.

Honey. Upon my honor, now, I—I—but (*snatching up a newspaper and throwing himself into a chair*) it's ridiculous my attempting to argue——

Mrs. H. (*taking up another paper and sitting down*) So it seems, indeed!

Honey. (*aside*) Hang her! (*aloud*) What have we got here—(*reads*)—"Matrimonial Squabbles!" Ha! ha!

Mrs. H. (*reads*) "Barbarous Conduct to a Wife! Outrageous Cruelty!"

Honey. (*reads*) "Incompatibility of Temper!" Oh! of course!

Mrs. H. (*reads*) "Prisoner a brutal looking fellow!" Ah! just like them all!

Honey. (*reads*) "Witnesses called to prove the infernal cruelty practiced by this woman towards her unfortunate husband!" Just so! the old story.

Mrs. H. (*reads*) "Poor victim deposed that her husband struck her on the head with a poker, exclaiming——"

Honey. (*reads*) "Forty shillings or one month!" Hope they gave her the month. They did! Happy, happy man!—for a *month.*

Mrs. H. (*reads*) "Penal servitude for seven years!" Serve him right, the ruffian.

Honey. (*reflectively*) Were it not for the protecting arm of the law, some husbands would surely long to change condition with the brutes.

Mrs. H. (*in the same tone*) Which, in the case of some husbands, would be no change at all.

Honey. So you call me a brute now, ma'am! (*starting up*) Well, if anyone had told me yesterday that my wife would ever behave to me like this, I'd have crammed the lie down his audacious throat.

Mrs. H. (*aside*) So would I. Oh, Kitty, Kitty, it's all your doing!

Honey. If anyone had said to me that my—my Constance was merely acting the affectionate wife; that her love was all a sham——

Mrs. H. (*aside*) If he goes on like this, I can't keep it up—I must give way.

Honey. That she would forget her vows of affection and obedience, and casting her duty from her, throw all her sweet womanly nature to the four winds——

Mrs. H. I deny it; it's a vile slander—I deny it, utterly.

Honey. What's the good of your denying it when the facts speak for themselves? Where is the duty which, as a wife, you owe to your husband?

Mrs. H. Paid, sir—paid, long ago—ten times over—and no receipt given for it.

Honey. Pooh! Love and duty are not to be looked upon as mere marketable articles; you'd make a regular debtor and creditor transaction of it, I suppose; so much payment for so much

love, as if you bought it at a grocer's; or worse still, perhaps, money down and pay your own carriage, as if you dealt at a co-operative store.

Mrs. H. In your present insolent mood, let me advise you to draw your illustrations from some source more congenial than the *Civil* service.

Honey. All very fine, Mrs. Honeyton, no doubt, but if an appeal to love and duty falls unregarded upon your ear, I have no resource but to take my stand upon my authority.

Mrs. H. Your authority? (*snapping her fingers*) That for your authority! Thus I trample upon your authority. (*stamping, and happening to come down on his toes*)

Honey. Confound it, Constance! (*hopping about*) Do you imagine that I carry my authority in my feet?

Mrs. H. (*aside*) Oh, his poor toes! (*aloud*) Somewhere in that quarter I suppose, as you are taking your stand upon it.

Honey. Mrs. Honeyton, do you know where such conduct as this of yours is likely to drive me?

Mrs. H. (*aside*) O, whatever's he going to say now? (*aloud*) To the chiropodist's, sir?

Honey. To the Divorce Court, madam.

Mrs. H. (*aside*) O, good gracious! (*aloud*) Very well, sir—to the Divorce Court be it—Honeyton *vs.* Honeyton by all means. But don't say I drove you there! don't say that, you Blue Beard, you!

Honey. Ha! ha! if you think that the mention of that oriental hero is calculated to annoy me, you're mistaken. 'Gad, no! it's a compliment rather. Ah! what a man he was—he knew how to stop a woman's tongue.

Mrs. H. Yes, by cutting off her head—a nice way, truly.

Honey. Mrs. Honeyton, upon my honor, I believe it is the only way.

Mrs. H. Well, in case you should feel inclined to adopt it, you'll pardon me if I retire.

Honey. One word, Constance. How long is this sort of thing to go on, please? For if this is your way of treating me, why the plague did you marry me?

Mrs. H. Why did I marry you? Why, you showed so distinctly that you wished it, (*mimicking him*) that I did it merely to oblige you—merely to oblige you, by Jove! (*laughing, goes off* L. *door, imitating* HONEYTON'S *manner—dropping the letter*)

Honey. She had me there, I confess; she certainly had me there. But what an atrocious—what a direct falsehood. If ever there was a case of mutual affection in this world it was ours. Why, she was over head and ears, over bonnet and chignon, in love with me; and, for my part, I—I— It occurs to me, do you know, that I've been a fool rather. While she was good and lov-

ing I did not appreciate it—I rather rejected it. If I recollect rightly I compared myself to that fly in the honey. What a confounded ass I must have been! A fly in the honey, indeed! (*looking for the insect*) By Jove! the poor wretch has tumbled into the hot water now. (*picking it out*) Faith, my friend, there are worse things than honey, ain't there? And haven't I done just the same; quarrelled with my honey and got into hot water as well? (*picking up the rose and kissing it*) I'll go back to the honey again. (*sticking it in his coat*) I'm just as much in love as ever I was, and I'll—what's this? (*taking up* KITTY'S *letter*) Eh! O, a letter from Kitty Hayland! She never told me she'd heard from Kitty. I always liked Kitty, she's a sweet girl. (*reads*) "Dearest Con." Eh! hang it! what the dickens! (*reads to end, then reads it again*) Oh, very well, Miss Kitty. Pernicious little mischief-maker! I always detested that girl; hated her like poison from the first. Ah! by Jove! I see it all. So Constance's behavior was—I understand—all a piece of acting, eh! That makes it quite another matter—never do to allow such a piece of trickery as that to be successful. By Jove, I'll fight her at her own weapons. You shall see the engineer hoisted with his own petard. I'll act the loving husband till she throws off her mask, and then—Here she comes. (*pockets the letter—she* enters L. *door*)

Mrs. H. (*aside*) I've dropped Kitty's letter somewhere, and oh, if he should have found it!

Honey. (*aside*) I mustn't be too gushing all of a sudden. (*aloud, pensively*) You appear to be looking for some thing, Constance.

Mrs. H. Yes—I—Kitty Hayland's letter! (*cautiously with a side look at him*) I've—I've dropped it somewhere.

Honey. Oh! you didn't tell me you had a letter from her—I hope she's well, the dear girl.

Mrs. H. (*aside*) It's all right; and he looks less cold than I have seen him for a long time—and he's put my roses in his button-hole, too. Victory!

Honey. Let me help you to look for it.

Mrs. H. Oh no, I couldn't think of troubling you.

Honey. Time was, Constance, when you wouldn't have called my help trouble.

Mrs. H. Time was, when you wouldn't have thought it so.

Honey. I don't think it so now, dear.

Mrs. H. (*aside*) Dear! That is an advance. Oh, if he should see this letter, it would ruin all.

Honey. (*gazing at her fondly*) Constance!

Mrs. H. (*aside*) I wonder whether I dropped it out of my pocket, or what. (*searching in various parts of the room*)

Honey. Constance. (*aside*) Hang it! why doesn't she attend?

Mrs. H. (*aside*) Perhaps I left it upstairs after all.

Honey. Constance! (*aside*) Confound her.

Mrs. H. Yes, you know it's quite a matter for speculation how often you are going to say that; that's three times. Are we to have any more of it?

Honey. This treatment at your hands—hands that ought——

Mrs. H. There, sir, you need not abuse my hands. There's nothing to find fault with in them, I'm sure. You can't complain of your luck in that respect at any rate. You've thrown sixes and ought to be contented.

Honey. Constance, I may have been to blame in the way in which I've treated you; I may have seemed cold and neglectful——

Mrs. H. You don't say so, sir.

Honey. Don't speak to me in those icy tones, Constance; I may have been wrong, but don't trample upon me when I own it. Remember, as Shakespeare says, that the poor beetle that you tread upon——

Mrs. H. Well I never! calling my feet beetlecrushers now. (*seating herself on sofa*, R., *and spreading her dress over it*) Go on, sir, pray go on; (*aside*) one or two other such speeches and I shall drop into his arms.

Honey. (*aside*) Two minutes more of this and I shall smash the furniture. (*aloud*) Still determined to misunderstand me? (*placing a footstool near her, after vainly trying to find room on sofa by her*) May I sit here at your feet?

Mrs. H. You can sit wherever you like, of course. (*aside*) It's his proper place, as I'm giving him such a lesson.

Honey. (*looking up at her and sighing*) Ah! (*aside*) Nothing like a sigh to start with. (*sighs*) Ah!

Mrs. H. (*aside*) How he's sighing, poor darling!

Honey. (*sighs*) Oh!

Mrs. H. (*aside*) Oh, dear! But I must hold out a little longer. (*aloud*) May I ask what those sighs are the prelude to?

Honey. Constance, I want to say three words to you.

Mrs. H. Gracious! is everything to go on in threes this morning? Three repetitions of my name, three sighs, and now a speech of three words.

Honey. And it is so then, and I have indeed lost the affection that was my chief earthly treasure. The glory is departed from my life, and the love that I had regarded as pure metal is but electro-plated after all—the jewels but worthless stones—the diamonds those peculiar to Bristol.

Mrs. H. (*aside*) I'm going, Kitty; I'm going.

Honey. (*aside*) Still unsoftened! Hang it! I'll—I'll shed a few tears. (*aloud*) Emotion such as mine may, perhaps, only excite your scorn; you may sneer at these drops as unmanly, but the anguish of the heart is insensible to scorn and derision. (*rising and*

walking to the fire-place) O, my widowed heart! O, my Constance! Mine no more!

Mrs. H. No, Ferdy, oh no, no. Your's still—your's always. O, forgive me! It has been all pretence, all sham, all—(*rushing towards him*)

Honey. (*holding out the letter*) Permit me!

Mrs. H. (*with a scream*) Ah!

Honey. Just so! Miss Kitty Hayland's very facetious letter. If you will glance over it again you will find one admonition which you have scarcely attended to as in prudence you ought. "Don't let him suspect that you have been incited to this by anyone else, and don't relax until he's quite subdued." I think I'll have a weed. (*strolls to the door, whistling softly, "See the conquering hero comes"*)

Mrs. H. (*just as he gains the door*) Stop, sir!

Honey. (*stopping*) Eh!

Mrs. H. I confess that this letter was what induced me to treat you as I have done.

Honey. Yes, thanks! Happened to have discovered that for myself. A confession when all's known deserves an absolution when all's forgotten. (*she tears up the letter and throws it into the fire*) Oh! that's ungrateful! that's imprudent! Why tear up your table of rules?

Mrs. H. Because I need them no longer; because I have that to guide me which is above rules; because my resistance will need for the future no supporting hand, no directing voice—henceforth it can walk without aid from anyone. You have destroyed the poor phantom of opposition by raising the very principle itself. This morning I was a mere puppet, an actress speaking another's words, moving by another's direction, but now I speak my own words, I stand on my own ground, and so standing, I defy you.

Honey. By gad! this is a different sort of thing, indeed.

Mrs. H. When I said I married you for anything but love, that I took you out of compassion only, I said what was false, what was utterly false. I married you for love—real, sincere, ardent love. When I said that I regretted my marriage with you, that I wished my hand had been given to another, I said what was false again. I had never regretted it, never for a single instant. When I spoke of neglecting my duty, of disobeying your wishes, I was acting, trying to cheat you into believing me undutiful and disobedient.

Honey. (*soothingly*) Yes, never mind; you did it so well, you——

Mrs. H. It was all a sham, all put on. I would not have disobeyed you really, for a kingdom; but now I've done with duty; I cast obedience to the winds—and the love of the girl and the love of the wife—(*falling upon the sofa and covering her face*) Oh, where are they—where are they?

Honey. This is the real thing past all denying—my confounded coldness and ill-temper have borne their fruit at last. (*to audience*) You know I've been a fool, and a brute, I have—I—I—Constance! Constance! I've been mad, cruel, wicked, anything you like; nothing's too bad for me. Pitch into me, do—get up and abuse my head off—do anything—I own all my faults. I've neglected you, treated you coldly, used you abominably—I see it all now; but, upon my honor, I'll be different for the future. Won't you believe me?

Mrs. H. How can I believe you, when——

Honey. Of course, how can you when I've been such a villain? How can I make you believe me—how can I prove to you—Will you believe me if I get some one to answer for me? Come, now—will you? Now, then, (*to audience*) who'll go bail for me—who'll promise and vow no end of things in my name? Will you? I give you my sacred word of honor I'll be a model of a husband for the future.

Come, say you will, say you'll assist me, do——
The welfare of this house depends on you.
If you'll but back me up, I must succeed——
If you condemn me, we're condemned indeed.
But if my faults you'll throw your mantle o'er,
I win back all I've lost, and something more.

Mrs. H. (*coming down to him*) I take your bail, (*to audience*) I've—many thanks to you——
Played for a husband's love, and won it, too;
But I'd another purpose, truth to tell,
To win your favor. Have I that as well?
How shall I learn it, Ferdy?

Honey. Well, suppose
You put it to the verdict of the rose. (*handing her a rose*)

Mrs. H. Oh, yes; what fun—now then, "amused or teased"——(*pulling the leaves off one by one*)
They're pleased, they're not, they're pleased, they're not, they're pleased—
They're not, they're——(*pausing*)

Honey. Well, proceed; you can't retract; Why don't you finish?

Mrs. H. Daren't, and that's the fact.
I simply daren't—I can't then, I declare,
Turn the last leaf and read the verdict there.
I'll to the fountain-head, come weal, come woe——
(*to audience*) Have we your favor? Answer, yes or no?

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